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Teaching Guide for: Anne Lister and the Ladies of Llangollen

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'Ladies, in general, have neither time nor opportunity to compete with men of college or liberal education'. Anne Lister's diary entry for 10 May 1824 serves as a pointed reminder that while the Romantic period witnessed a marked increase in women as cultural producers and consumers, their control of economic, political, and intellectual issues remained carefully circumscribed by male power and authority.

My article, 'An Introduction to the Literary Persons[s] of Anne Lister and the Ladies of Llangollen', explores how the daily journal entry could be used as a space for personal, but also larger public reflections – about literacy, female education, social mobility, and politics, for example. This Teaching Guide offers a brief overview of a sample syllabus for this article. The diaries of Anne Lister and the Ladies of Llangollen are often studied as sources with which to explore Romantic discourses of sexuality. The reading list, below, is arranged thematically, in order to suggest alternative reading strategies. I have also included 'focus questions', which might be used to engender further discussion about the texts studied – and their related contexts.

Diarists

Burney, Frances, *Journals and Letters*, selected with an introduction by Peter Sabor and Lars E. Troide. London: Penguin, 2001.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844*, edited by Paula Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995.

The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley, edited by Richard Edgcumbe. London: John Murray, 1913.

The Woodforde Papers and Diaries, edited by Dorothy Woodforde. Bungay: Morrow, 1990. Second Edition.

Wordsworth, Dorothy, *Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, edited by Pamela Woof. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Life writing

Foster, J., 'On a Man's Writing Memoirs of Himslef', in *Essays in a Series of Letters*. London: 1835. Eleventh Edition.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques, *Confessions*, trans. Angela Scholar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Reveries of a Solitary Walker, trans. Peter France. Hamondsworth: Penguin, 1979.

Performativity

Charke, Charlotte, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke, by herself*, edited by Robert Rehder. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999.

Robinson, Mary, *Memoirs of the late Mrs Robinson*, in *Women's Theatrical Memoirs*, edited by Sharon Setzer. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007.

Hamilton, Elizabeth, *Memoirs of Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, with a selections from her correspondence and unpublished writings*. London: 1818.

Scandal

Byron, Lord George Gordon, *Don Juan*, in *Major Works* edited by Jerome McGann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Hazlitt, William, *Liber Amoris: or, the new Pygmalion*. London: Hogarth, 1985.

Wilson, Harriette, *Harriette Wilson's Memoirs: The Memoirs of the Reigning Courtesan of Regency London*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 2003.

Suggestions for further reading

Blodgett, H., *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries*.

Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1989.

Castle, Terry, *The Apparitional Lesbian*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Cook, Daniel and Amy Culley (editors), *Women's Life Writing, 1700-1850: Gender, Genre and Authorship*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Gale, Maggie and Viv Gardner (editors), *Auto/Biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Stanley, L., *The Autobiographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Autobiography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

Treadwell, James, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature 1783-1834*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Wahrman, Dror, *The Making of the Modern Self*. London: Yale University Press, 2004.

Useful Websites

History to Herstory: <http://www.historytoherstory.org.uk>

Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present: <http://orlando.cambridge.org>

Plas Newydd: Home to the Ladies of Llangollen: <http://www.llangollen.com/plas.html>

Focus questions

- ✚ Discuss the representation of identity in two or more of the texts you have studied.
- ✚ Can the journal/diary be best described as a 'performative' text?
- ✚ What picture of provincial life do we gain by reading the diaries of Anne Lister and the Ladies of Llangollen?
- ✚ Is it helpful to think of these texts as 'confessional'?
- ✚ List and compare some of the perceived functions of the journals you have studied.
- ✚ To what extent do these writers succeed in using their diaries to carve out a private space? How is the world of public engagement represented?
- ✚ Are private diaries more useful to the social historian than the literary critic?